

North Branch Area Schools “Person of the Week”

Welcome to our NBAS Person of the Week! Each week, we highlight a member of our incredible team to showcase their unique contributions and share a bit about their journey. This week, we’re shining the spotlight on Katie Wagner, a Science teacher at North Branch High School.

In the classroom, Katie brings science to life with engaging lessons, hands-on experiments, and innovative teaching methods that inspire curiosity and critical thinking. Her ability to connect with students, make complex concepts accessible, and encourage inquiry-based learning has made a lasting impact on countless young minds. Katie ensures that every learner feels empowered and supported.

Katie is also very deeply involved in the school community outside of the classroom. She volunteers for committees, helps coordinate school-wide initiatives, and always steps in to assist whenever there is a need—often working tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the success of students and colleagues alike.

Her quiet leadership and unwavering commitment create a positive, collaborative environment that strengthens the entire school. Katie's impact is profound, her dedication is unwavering, and her passion for education is truly inspiring.



How long have you worked for NBAS?

I am finishing my 28th year at NBAS.

In a few sentences, briefly describe your role(s) at NBAS.

I am a high school science teacher who mostly teaches different levels of chemistry and AP Computer Science Principles. In my time here I have taught Physical Science, Michigan Natural Resources, Environmental Science, Biology, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, Chemistry, Chemistry II,

Organic Chemistry, Algebra, ACT Test Prep, and Freshmen Focus. Currently, I serve as Science Department Chair, Class of 2025 Sponsor, and Culture Club Co-chair (with Shelby Franklin). I have served as a sponsor to several classes, Advisor to Student Council, Advisor to National Honor Society, and was the Quiz Bowl Coach for close to 15 years (with Wayne Haney and Ruth Stover-Lange).

Did you attend NBAS as a student? If so, which school(s)? If not, where are you from?

I graduated from Birch Run High School and made my way to North Branch via Michigan State University. North Branch was my 1st interview after student teaching and I loved the small town feel and the brand-new high school. I chose this job from a couple of offers because it was a full-time science position.

What has been your favorite part of working here? What aspect of your job do you find most rewarding?

My absolute favorite part of working at North Branch High School was meeting my husband here 27 years ago and eventually adding Samantha and Seth to our family. I am thankful every day for their love and support. Beyond that, some of the very best people I have met in my life have worked for or currently work for North Branch Area Schools. I am so thankful for the strong group of teachers including Nancy LeTourneau, Nancy Spencer, Nancy Birkenhauer, Sharon Trato, Patty McCormack, and Mark Hiltunen who all guided me in my early years and helped to shape who I became as a teacher. The science department of Brent Baksa, Carrie Wenta, and Maryanne McMurtry are amazing educators and friends who I am lucky to be able to talk about science, plan for our department, and just share a good laugh. I am inspired by my current colleagues like Krislene Kemp and Bethany Cordle who are full of energy and new ideas while caring deeply about the education of North Branch students. I am also blessed to have Shelby Franklin in my world. She is my sounding board, helps me keep my sanity on bad days, and celebrates the joy with me on good days. I am so thankful for our friendship.

Even with all of the amazing adults I work with every day, the students are the reason I'm here. Helping them learn chemistry, seeing their excitement during a lab, and showing them that they can do things that might be considered difficult is why we are here.

What is your proudest accomplishment during your time at the North Branch Schools or what is your favorite NBAS memory?

When I look back at the time I have spent here, the thing that matters the most to me is the relationships that I have developed with my coworkers and students. I have been to graduation parties, weddings, baby showers, and funerals of both colleagues and former students where I have felt like I was a part of their family. Sometimes it is difficult to be able to tell if I am making any difference at all in the lives of my students. Being a part of these major life events, getting messages years later about something I said or did that made a huge impact on someone, getting anonymous gifts at Christmas thanking me for helping them get through a rough patch, or walking through a store and having conversations with former students really makes me reflect on my interactions with people and how I approach situations. I try to always lead with an open heart and open mind because you never know what is going on in someone's life.

Here is what some of her co-workers had to say...

- Katie is an amazing colleague, stellar teacher & just an incredible human. She does many things to make NBHS a great place for students and staff alike (often in anonymity ...trying to stay out of the spotlight). Well-deserved nomination.
- Katie Wagner is an amazing teacher that is dedicated to caring for her students and helping them succeed. Every student comments on how enjoyable her classes are and what a caring and compassionate environment she creates in her classroom. As a

member of the culture club, Katie also creates the same environment for her colleagues as she does her students. Katie dedicates countless hours to the district helping with concessions, Quiz Bowl, and just about every student organization here at the high school.

- Katie is an amazing person, inside and out. She is the "go to" person for both staff and students in the high school. Katie is there to lend an ear and listen in any situation without judging. Students are always commenting on how sweet Mrs. Wagner is and how much they love having her class. She is the glue that helps hold this building together, always putting the needs of others first and making sure that staff and students are taken care of in times of need. In addition to teaching, Katie also organizes the bronco pride celebrations, honors (award) night, she is a class sponsor, helps with band, and coordinates events for staff, just to name a few. NBHS is truly blessed to have Katie in our school.
- Today, we are honoring a teacher whose kindness, generosity, and selflessness have made a lasting impact on both her students and all of us who have the privilege of working alongside her.

She is the person everyone can count on—the first to volunteer for any task, the first to offer a listening ear, and the first to make everyone feel seen and valued. Whether it's staying after school to help a student understand a lesson or volunteering her time for school events, or creating amazing meals for her family here at school, she always gives so much of herself to everything she does.

Her classroom isn't just a place of learning—it's a place of comfort, trust, and support. Students know they can approach her with anything, and she will meet them with empathy and kindness.

Her generosity extends beyond the classroom walls—whether it's organizing a school event as a class sponsor, offering a helping hand to a colleague, or supporting friends in need, she's always there, giving without expectation and uplifting those around her. It's no surprise that she has earned the well-deserved title of "The Nicest Person in the School." But for those of us who have witnessed her dedication and her heart, we know that she's much more than that. She's phenomenal teacher, and a true embodiment of what it means to be selfless.

Thank you, Katie, for being such a vital part of our school community. Please join us in celebrating her well-deserved recognition!